and built an artificial island for BP. The well exploded and caused an environmental disaster, which fixed those bears....

That's what he wanted to do to the dealers. Cause an environmental disaster on Thing Street, and start a Great Depression.

It was already GROUND ZERO. Tired, shopworn, worthless, exhausted things. How could he make a sale? Every night was GARBAGE NIGHT.

Dealers raked mounds of shit together on the curb, demanding to know HOW MUCH!

Five DOLLARS!

They'd tear off a chunk of it. Half a mouldering buffet.

Now how much!

Same price!

So they'd daub on some more shit. Same price? He'd have to make it a package deal!

At least there was still sex. He never got enough of that either, but not getting enough sex was still more enjoyable than not getting enough money, because if you weren't getting enough sex you were at least getting some; whereas, if you weren't getting enough money you were probably saving it all.

The plump matrons and their buffets. He took them on top of Titanic 9-piece mahogany icebergs. They were seals to his polar bear, barking and flapping when he bit and moved on to the next.

He liked to say, like one of his own pain-in-the-ass clients, he was JUST BROWSING!

Isitolde didn't care. She was so old, she wanted to know how old everything else was, so she could surround herself with things that were even older than herself. That was what she wanted Romeo for, old things that made her feel young again. RELATIVELY!

His Thing Store was her Fountain of Youth.

Niagara Falls!

Romeo despised her. Called her Flipper. For the seal's limb, but mainly because he suspected she resold her purchases to that wraith down Thing Street, for a lot more money, as soon as they came to terms.

That could take a while, judging by their inexplicable absences, while Johnny conducted horrified clients through the morass of mouldering things, their uncertain and reluctant Virgil. Half were already sold, but without Romeo to tell him, he didn't know which half. Romeo, Romeo. If only he'd his NOSE! He guessed who'd bought it all, already. Isitolde!

They finally emerged from the tiny crapper, Isitolde cramming a fresh twenty in her fat budget, the difference between her rates and the price of another buffet. Her face powdered with Romeo's talc, like she'd been doing the Plantation Act backwards.

Her wraith joined them on the curb, moaning he'd lost two fanbacks and the sweetest Empire settee, when the dealer he'd sent them to for upholstering went bankrupt. He begged Romeo to come, and rescue them.

He didn't see the scowl on Romeo's face when he said, it was giving the business a bad name....

Jack paused on his velocipede, sniffing. He swore Romeo'd had something. He could smell it. He noticed the wraith, and saw Nemesis approaching, the Hydro Metre Man....

He fled, Isitolde balanced on his sissy-bars....

Sure, Romeo said. To anyone remaining, pricnipally the wraith, and the Metre Man.

Go down, he said rattling an enermous ring of skeleton keys at the top of the trap-door. They were everyone's keys, and he owned them.

Fanbacks and settee beckoned below. Overhead the metres gleamed, like spotlights!